

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION**

RONALD D. SMITH,)	
ID # 1969543,)	
Petitioner,)	
vs.)	No. 3:17-CV-138-D (BH)
)	
LORIE DAVIS, Director,)	Referred to U.S. Magistrate Judge
Texas Department of Criminal)	
Justice, Correctional Institutions Division,)	
Respondent.)	

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

By *Special Order 3-251*, this case has been referred for findings, conclusions, and recommendation. Based on the relevant findings and applicable law, the portion of the petition for writ of habeas corpus challenging the burglary conviction under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 should be transferred to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals as a successive petition, and the portion challenging his child pornography convictions should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction because he has discharged those sentences.

I. BACKGROUND

Ronald D. Smith (Petitioner) was convicted of burglary of a habitation in Cause No. F01-01397, and sentenced to 60 years' confinement, and he was convicted of possession or promotion of child pornography in Cause Nos. F00-32397, F00-32399, and F00-32400, and sentenced to 10 years' confinement in each case on August 7, 2001, in the 203rd Judicial District Court of Dallas County, Texas. (*See* docs. 17-3 at 12; 18-10 at 73; 18-13 at 75; 18-16 at 73.)¹

¹ Page citations refer to the CM/ECF system page number at the top of each page rather than the page numbers at the bottom of each filing.

II. JURISDICTION

“Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. They possess only that power authorized by Constitution and statute, which is not to be expanded by judicial decree.” *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994) (citations omitted). They “must presume that a suit lies outside this limited jurisdiction, and the burden of establishing federal jurisdiction rests on the party seeking the federal forum.” *Howery v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 243 F.3d 912, 916 (5th Cir. 2001). They have “a continuing obligation to examine the basis for jurisdiction.” *See MCG, Inc. v. Great W. Energy Corp.*, 896 F.2d 170, 173 (5th Cir. 1990).

A. Burglary

Petitioner’s challenge to his burglary conviction is successive. He previously unsuccessfully challenged the same burglary conviction through a federal habeas petition that was denied on April 18, 2007. *See Smith v. Quarterman*, No. 3:04-CV-1240-P (N.D. Tex. Apr. 18, 2007).

A district court cannot exercise jurisdiction over a second or successive § 2254 petition without authorization from the court of appeals. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b); *Crone v. Cockrell*, 324 F.3d 833, 836 (5th Cir. 2003). A petition is successive if it raises a claim that was or could have been raised in an earlier petition or otherwise constitutes an abuse of the writ. *Hardemon v. Quarterman*, 516 F.3d 272, 275 (5th Cir. 2008); *Crone*, 324 F.3d at 836-37. If it essentially represents a second attack on the same conviction raised in the earlier petition, a petition is successive. *Hardemon*, 516 F.3d at 275-76 (distinguishing *Crone* because “*Crone* involved multiple § 2254 petitions attacking a single judgment”).² A second petition is not successive if the prior

² Although *Crone* involved a challenge to petitioner’s holding judgment of conviction followed by a challenge to post-conviction and post-sentence administrative actions that stripped him of good-time credits, *Hardemon* considered both challenges to be against “the same conviction”.

petition was dismissed due to prematurity or for lack of exhaustion, however. *See Slack v. McDaniel*, 529U.S. 473, 487 (2000) (declining to construe an application as second or successive when it followed a previous dismissal due to a failure to exhaust state remedies); *Stewart v. Martinez-Villareal*, 523 U.S. 637, 643-46 (1998) (declining to construe an application as second or successive when it followed a previous dismissal due to prematurity, and noting the similarities of such dismissal to one based upon a failure to exhaust state remedies). Otherwise, “dismissal of a first habeas petition for technical procedural reasons would bar the prisoner from ever obtaining federal habeas review.” *Stewart*, 523 U.S. at 645.

Here, Petitioner challenges the same conviction that he challenged in a prior federal petition that was denied on its merits. Under *Hardemon* and *Crone*, he was required to present all available claims in that petition. A claim is available when it “could have been raised had the petitioner exercised due diligence.” *Leonard v. Dretke*, No. 3:02-CV-0578-H, 2004 WL 741286, at *3 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 5, 2004) (recommendation of Mag. J.), adopted by 2004 WL 884578 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 20, 2004). The crucial question in determining availability is whether Petitioner knew or should have known through the exercise of due diligence the facts necessary to his current claims when he filed his federal challenge to the same conviction.

Petitioner’s federal petition is successive within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b) because it raises claims that were or could have been raised in his initial federal petition. When a petition is second or successive, the petitioner must seek an order from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that authorizes this Court to consider the petition. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b)(3)(A). The Fifth Circuit “may authorize the filing of a second or successive application only if it determines that the application makes a prima facie showing that the application satisfies the requirements of [§ 2244(b)].”

Id. § 2244(b)(3)(C). To present a claim in a second or successive application that was not presented in a prior application, the application must show that it is based on: (1) newly discovered evidence that, if proven and viewed in light of the evidence as a whole, would be sufficient to establish by clear and convincing evidence that no reasonable factfinder would have found him guilty of the offense; or (2) a new rule of constitutional law, made retroactive to cases on collateral review by the Supreme Court, that was previously unavailable. *Id.* § 2244(b)(2).

Because the Fifth Circuit has not issued an order authorizing the district court to consider this successive petition for habeas relief, this Court lacks jurisdiction over Petitioner’s challenge to his burglary conviction.

B. Child Pornography

This Court lacks jurisdiction over the challenge to the child pornography convictions because Petitioner is not in custody for those convictions.

Federal district courts have jurisdiction to entertain petitions for writs of habeas corpus only from persons who are “in custody in violation of the Constitution or laws or treaties of the United States.” 28 U.S.C. § 2254(a). The “in custody” requirement is a jurisdictional prerequisite, and a petitioner must be in custody at the time the petition is filed. *Maleng v. Cook*, 490 U.S. 488, 490 (1989). Generally, one satisfies the “in custody” requirement when the sentence for the challenged conviction has not fully expired at the time the petitioner files a petition under § 2254. See *Carafas v. Lavallee*, 391 U.S. 234, 238 (1968). While actual physical detention is not required to meet this custody requirement, there must be some restraint on the liberty of a person. *Jones v. Cunningham*, 371 U.S. 236 (1963). “[O]nce the sentence imposed for a conviction has completely expired, the collateral consequences of that conviction are not themselves sufficient to render an individual ‘in

custody’ for the purposes of a habeas attack upon it.” *Maleng*, 490 U.S. at 492.

Petitioner has discharged his sentences for child pornography. (See docs. 15-2 at 3; 19-5 at 86; 19-7 at 86; 19-9 at 86.) A federal court lacks subject matter jurisdiction to entertain a § 2254 petition that directly challenges the validity of a conviction for which the sentence has been discharged because the petitioner is not “in custody” for that conviction, “even if the prior conviction was used to enhance the sentences imposed for any subsequent crimes of which [petitioner] is convicted.” *Josey v. Thaler*, No. 4:11-CV-0633-A, 2012 WL 195002 at *2 (N.D. Tex. Jan. 23, 2012) (citing *Maleng*, 490 U.S. at 492).

Petitioner is not “in custody” for purposes of the child pornography convictions, and his challenge to those convictions should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

III. RECOMMENDATION

The portion of the petition for writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 challenging the burglary conviction should be **TRANSFERRED** to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit pursuant to *Henderson v. Haro*, 282 F.3d 862, 864 (5th Cir. 2002) and *In re Epps*, 127 F.3d 364, 365 (5th Cir. 1997). The portion of the habeas petition challenging the child pornography convictions should be **DISMISSED** for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

SIGNED this 14th day of November, 2017.



IRMA CARRILLO RAMIREZ
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SERVICE AND
NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL/OBJECT**

A copy of these findings, conclusions and recommendation shall be served on all parties in the manner provided by law. Any party who objects to any part of these findings, conclusions and recommendation must file specific written objections within 14 days after being served with a copy. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). In order to be specific, an objection must identify the specific finding or recommendation to which objection is made, state the basis for the objection, and specify the place in the magistrate judge's findings, conclusions and recommendation where the disputed determination is found. An objection that merely incorporates by reference or refers to the briefing before the magistrate judge is not specific. Failure to file specific written objections will bar the aggrieved party from appealing the factual findings and legal conclusions of the magistrate judge that are accepted or adopted by the district court, except upon grounds of plain error. *See Douglass v. United Servs. Automobile Ass'n*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996).


IRMA CARRILLO RAMIREZ
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE